



democratherald.com

Print Page

Thursday, April 14, 2005

Last modified Tuesday, April 12, 2005 6:03 PM PDT

## District awaits results of soil tests at Liberty

By Jennifer Moody  
Albany Democrat-Herald

Test results of soil from around Liberty Elementary School are due back today, and the Albany Research Center hopes they'll provide clues as to why chemical levels of TCE in the area are so high.

George Dooley, director of the Albany Research Center, and Geoff Brown of the Department of Environmental Quality spoke to the Albany School Board on Monday, updating their work at the school so far.

Air samples have shown minute traces of tri-chloroethylene, or TCE, a probable cancer agent, inside the school.

The research center is aware that the chemical is also present in groundwater some 20 to 30 feet below both Liberty and the research center, which is across the street from the school. The question now is whether the groundwater contamination is at any way linked to the traces in the air.

In either case, Liberty might be able to lower its TCE readings by better ventilation, Brown said.

"First we're going to evaluate the exposure and see if anyone's at risk, then we're going to evaluate what to do about it," he said.

TCE is a nonflammable, colorless, sweet-smelling solvent commonly found in products such as White-out and spot remover. It was widely used, and not well regulated, during the 1980s.

Traces of TCE also have been found at Sunrise Elementary and West Albany High schools. West Albany is on the same block as Sunrise, across the play fields, but Sunrise is more than a mile away.

Albany school officials are stressing that drinking water at the schools comes from the city's system, not groundwater, and is not contaminated with TCE.

Brown noted that trace amounts of TCE in the air are a concern not because they could cause immediate health effects, but because they pose a long-term, chronic risk.

Copyright © 2005 Democrat-Herald